

When I showed Chris Larson's piece *County Line* in a group exhibition at my gallery in 2004, I was astounded by the complexity of his artistic approach. Both the obsessiveness in his work and its aesthetic realization impressed me deeply. Larson belongs to that group of artists who do not limit themselves to a single media. Besides performance, film, drawings, and photography, Larson mainly produces sculptures; his

Foreword

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choice of media makes it clear that the exploration of pictorial and corporeal space is an essential aspect of his work. It is impossible to categorize his work within a single traditional concept. He consciously leaves the exhibition space behind and intervenes in the public space, installing for example disturbing, anarchic elements such as the 2006 sculpture of a piano in a tree situated in front of the gallery. The piece was exposed to wind and

weather, its materiality was implicitly intended to change and decay and hence to withdraw itself from the presentational aesthetics inherent in the White Cube.

It is no accident that museums and exhibition venues are traditionally compared to cemeteries: by presenting art as the end product of a life or as part of a period of artistic activity, they expunge this life as such. Larson's artistic practices do not reconcile themselves to this fact. He disregards the established exhibition space as a limitation on his work and positions himself performatively as an artist in his works in order to underscore their vitality. In his large piece *County Line* from 2004, the artist himself is part of a complex machinery. His body is the actor; it merges with the machine and squirms its way through the seemingly absurd devices. At times, his writhings appear nothing less than violent, and it is uncertain to what extent pain and physical torture are part of a concept dealing with the loss of corporeality in the twenty-first century. Larson's visions are dismal statements about the abysses of human existence. Historical occurrences as well as

current events can be drawn upon to trigger the execution of his pieces. Larson is noncommittal about their interpretations. But time and again it seems very obvious that it is the collision, the violent encounter between different worlds, that stimulates Larson. It is the collision of human beings, ideals, thoughts, races, convictions, as well as the clashes of religions and political outlooks that Larson stages as a test arrangement to find out what happens during these often violent confrontations.

His piece *Crush Collision* conclusively shifts attention away from the project results and toward the processuality and enigmatic procedures within the thirteen-minute video and, in the end, toward the subjectivity of the project's author.

The present publication has been produced to accompany the presentation of Larson's new film *Deep North* at the Rochester Art Center and gallery magnus müller in fall 2008. The book also introduces the reader to Larson's mechanistic narrations and attempts to provide a long-overdue assessment of the artist's work.



Flügel
2006 • Wood, mixed media • 150 x 180 x 300 cm
Site-specific installation at magnus müller, 2006